

# USDA/Rural Development

N O R T H D A K O T A

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **USDA CONTINUES CANKDESKA CIKANA (LITTLE HOOP) COMMUNITY COLLEGE DESIGNATION AS A NATIONAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**

**Fort Totten, ND, June 26, 2003.** . .The United States Department of Agriculture's Office of Rural Development has designated **Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC)** as a National Center of Excellence (NCE).

Clare Carlson, the North Dakota Rural Development State Director with USDA, presented Thalia Esser, president of CCCC, with the official NCE designation.

"Centers of Excellence play a key role in bringing new ideas, economic development, and "hope" to under-served rural communities," said Carlson. "These partnerships will help bring economic opportunity to rural America."

**Cankdeska Cikana (Little Hoop) Community College College** has received this honor in the past and is one of only eight colleges in the nation so designated.

The NCE program consists of one-year cooperative partnerships between eight rural institutions of higher education and USDA. The NCE program focuses on economic opportunity, sustainable community development, community-based partnerships, and a strategic vision for change. The cooperative agreement creates strong information sharing and technical assistance links between Empowerment Zones, Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP) Zones, Champion

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Communities, state USDA Rural Development field staff, colleges/universities, civic organizations and other rural communities.

Each NCE will receive \$20,000 from the Department of Agriculture to help rural communities achieve sustainable community development. Funds will be administered through USDA Rural Development's Office of Community Development, which is responsible for Empowerment Zones, REAP Zones, Champion Communities and rural community development technical assistance.

USDA Rural Development is the lead federal entity for rural economic and community development needs. It administers financial and technical assistance through a network of state Rural Development offices, various non-profit and educational institutional partners, and its national office. Rural Development provides access to a range of financial and intellectual tools (including technical and educational assistance, loans, loan guarantees, and grants) through the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Rural Housing Service, Rural Utilities Service and the Office of Community Development.

In Fiscal Year 2002, USDA Rural Development **over \$76.7 million** in loan and grant financing in North Dakota.

For more information on USDA Rural Development programs, please contact any Rural Development office or by visiting our web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.



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